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SUBJECT: LATVIAN VIEWS ON GAERC - FOCUSED ON GEORGIA

REF: STATE 170214

Classified By: DCM Phillip L. Antweiler. Reason: 1.4 (D)

11. (C) Pol/econ chief delivered reftel demarche to Veronika Erte, A/S-level official responsible for EU issues at the MFA, on October 12. The GOL adopted its GAERC positions in cabinet on October 10. Latvia will be represented at the GAERC by its Ambassador to the EU.

12. (C) Georgia - Although not in our points, this is an important issue for Latvia. Latvia believes that recent tensions between Russia and Georgia should be resolved by peaceful means. Latvia believes that the frozen conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia are at the root of the problem and current mechanisms to address the conflicts are not effective. Latvia hopes that the EU will begin a discussion of how it can better contribute to the effective resolution of these conflicts. Erte said the GOL supports a statement that characterizes Russian actions in response to the Georgian arrests of the Russian officers as "disproportionate" and which calls on the Russians to stop these actions. Latvia believes that Russian-Georgian relations should be on the agenda for all high level Russia-EU talks, including the October 20 informal dinner with President Putin.

13. (C) Sudan - Latvia supports the draft council conclusions, including extension of EU support to AMIS through the end of the year.

14. (C) Balkans - On Kosovo, Latvia continues to look for a sustainable solution that promotes regional stability by the end of the year and supports Ahtisaari's efforts in this regard. Erte said that they hope that the BiH elections will result in a stable government that can tackle tough reforms of the constitution and restructuring of the police. Latvia welcomes and supports the Solana/Rehn report on the future EU role in BiH after the closure of OHR.

15. (C) Enlargement - Latvia will support the commission recommendation to have Romania and Bulgaria join the EU on January 1, although it will call on Bulgaria to make further progress on JHA issues, especially transparency in the judiciary. They hope that the two will move quickly to nominate commissioners.

16. (C) Iran - Latvia feels that Iran has failed to fulfill its obligations under UNSCR 1696, but hopes the issue can be resolved through peaceful means. The ball is in Iran's court, Erte said. It is impossible to ignore the threat posed by Iran's nuclear program. If it fails to cease reprocessing and other activities, the issue should return to the UNSC for action.

17. (C) MEPP/Lebanon - Latvia supports full implementation of UNSCR 1701 as an important part of achieving peace in the region. All parties should refrain from unilateral action and return to the roadmap. Latvia believes that the

kidnapped Israeli soldiers should be returned and Israel should release the PA ministers and legislators that it arrested. Latvia hopes Israel will make full use of the TIM to get money to the PA and believes all border crossings to Gaza should be open, something for which active EU engagement would be useful.

18. (C) Lebanon (cont.) - Erte said that Latvia is ready to contribute to the identification and restoration of damaged cultural sites in the city of Tyre. The Latvian culture minister has written to the government of Lebanon to extend this offer. Latvia is also ready to make its EOD team available to train Lebanese deminers if the Lebanese would like, although Erte said this offer had not yet been formally extended.

19. (C) North Korea/UNSC/Zimbabwe - Erte said that the draft GAERC language on North Korea was not yet ready, but Latvia strongly condemns the DPRK test and will look for a strong statement from the GAERC. Erte reaffirmed Latvia's strong support for Guatemala over Venezuela in the UNSC, but said Latvia lacked the diplomatic presence in the Middle East or Africa to lobby on this issue. Erte concluded by saying that Latvia would support continued EU efforts to support AU and SADC activities to improve the humanitarian and social conditions in Zimbabwe.

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